



La Niña Outlook

The impact of the prevailing *La Niña* condition continues to affect the southern and south-eastern pastoralist areas of the country and is expanding to Afar region. According to WFP's latest report, parts of Afar, Somali, the eastern and southeastern pastoralist and agro-pastoralist parts of Oromia and the southern lowlands of SNNPR dependent on the *gu/genna/sugum* (March to May) rains have received very little or no rain to date. Meanwhile, major *belg*-producing parts of Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR are experiencing poor rains, as earlier predicted by weather forecasts. For more information, contact wfp.addisababa@wfp.org

Drought Response Update

According to the latest Somali Region Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau (DPPB) Food Security Update, existing water shortages have worsened in many parts of the region. Meanwhile, the price of water has been steadily increasing, from ETB 40 (approximately US\$ 2.4) in December to ETB 250 (US\$ 15) in March for 200 litres of water. The emergency response continues, with 186 trucks deployed as part of ongoing water trucking operations financed by the regional government, UNICEF and a number of local and international NGOs. Four mobile workshops are now conducting borehole maintenance throughout the region, and mobile health and nutrition teams are supporting basic health, nutrition, and water and sanitation services. Despite these efforts, however, there have been reports of additional boreholes that have become non-functional as a result of the stress placed on them. Deaths of cattle and other livestock – including camels, which normally resist drought better than other species – have been reported, as have internal population migrations. In Geladid and Wuchi-Wachi villages of Shekosh *woreda*, Korahe zone, the preliminary observations of a rapid assessment jointly conducted by the Somali Regional DPPB, Regional Water, Health and Agriculture Bureaus, WFP, UNICEF and OCHA reported access to water in the area as critical. The boreholes serving the local community and a large number of pastoralists and their livestock who have migrated to the area have been temporarily repaired, but the repairs are not expected to last long, according to the borehole operators. Additional repairs to and maintenance of the boreholes were recommended for top priority, as their failure would have serious implications on the community.

In Afar, water trucking has started in Elidar *woreda*, supported by the regional Disaster Prevention and Food Security Programmes Coordination Office (DPFSO) and Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA, a local NGO), and in the northern part of Dupiti (Serdo area), supported by the federal Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (DRMFSS). The region has also requested support for water trucking in Bidu and Kori *woredas*. Meanwhile, the regional Disaster Risk Management Coordination (DRMC) forum reported that pasture shortages are critical in Dallol, Erebt, parts of Abaala, Koneba and Megale *woredas*, while livestock deaths have been recorded in Dallol (200 cattle, 300 shoats and 80 equines) and Bidu *woredas* due to water and pasture scarcity. According to the recent targeted supplementary feeding (TSF) rescreening exercise, elevated malnutrition levels have been reported in some *woredas*, including Elidar, Mille, Dallol, Bidu, Kori, Dupiti, and Erebt. The DRMC meeting held on 23 March 2011 recommended the revitalization of the regional WASH task force to address the current context situation, critical gaps and required responses and to prepare a WASH response plan. For more information, contact: kmcdonald@unicef.org, afardpfsb2@yahoo.com or srs.earlywarning@gmail.com

Food Security Update

WFP reports that regional requests for relief food assistance have increased for Somali and Oromia, as the poor rainfall performance aggravates their already-poor food security situation. In the Somali Region, moderate to extreme levels of food insecurity have been recorded in all *deyr*-receiving zones, according to the DPPB update. Factors including the poor supply of staple foodstuffs, limited accessibility to markets, poor livestock production and declining prices for livestock are compounding the impact of the current drought. In all main cereal markets in the region, the price of staple cereals has increased slightly compared to the last quarter of 2010. In some areas, including Warder and Kebridehar, local cereals are not available at all. At the same time, the price and demand for livestock has fallen, driving down pastoralist terms of trade. This puts pastoralists' future livestock asset holding at risk as households try to sell more and more animals to compensate for declining profits and the increasing need to buy food, water and other commodities. The timely onset of *gu* (April – May) rains is critical for the recovery of both pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods; however, the outlook suggests that the *La Niña* conditions will prevail, resulting in below-normal *gu* rains. In the worst case scenario, the DPPB report indicates, the failure of the *gu* rains would result in severe water and pasture shortages, crop failure, massive livestock mortality, zero terms of trade, and high malnutrition rates resulting in child mortality. For more information, contact: wfp.addisababa@wfp.org or srs.earlywarning@gmail.com

Agriculture Update

In SNNPR, the potential failure or a serious delay in the *belg* rains will have serious implications for the crucial May to June harvest (this period coincides with the regional hunger season), as well as *meher* season activities. According to FAO, although there are still plenty of sweet potatoes and other root crops in regional markets at present, the sweet potatoes currently planted have wilted or dried up. During normal years, the regional *belg* season harvest contributes between 40 to 45 per cent of the region's average annual crop production. In some agro-pastoralist *woredas*, its importance is much greater: in Dawro and South Omo, *belg* crops account for up to 85 per cent of annual production; in Gamo Gofa, more than 70 per cent; and in Wolayita, as much as 60 per cent. For more information, contact: Dorelyn.Jose@fao.org

Health Update

The Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute (EHNRI) reported 634 new measles cases (none fatal) from Oromia (West Hararge, Borena, Bale and Guiji zones), Amhara (North Gonder zone), SNNP (Gamo Gofa and South Omo zones) and Tigray (Central, Northwestern, Southern and Western zones) between 21 and 27 March 2011. Oromia was the most affected zone during the reporting week, with 62 per cent of reported cases. During the same week, EHNRI also reported 53 new cases of meningitis, with six deaths, in Harana Bulluk *woreda*, Bale zone of Oromia. Outbreak investigation is underway and mass vaccination has been started in the *woreda*. For more information, contact: who-wro@et.afro.who.int